

## III.—Remarks on the Names of some Australian Birds.

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AMONGST the Australian Cuckoos the name *Cuculus flabelliformis* of Latham appears to have been erroneously applied by writers in general. This name (Ind. Orn. Suppl. ii. p. xxx) was founded upon the “Fan-tailed Cuckoo” of the ‘General Synopsis of Birds’ (Suppl. ii. p. 138). Latham’s description of the tail of the latter is as follows:—“The tail is greatly cuneiform, the two middle feathers black; the others the same on the outer webs, but barred on the inner with alternate black and white.” Latham’s figure, too, on plate cxxvi. agrees with his description, shewing that the outer webs of the outermost feather on both sides—the only feathers with the outer webs visible—are unbarred, and that the inner webs are only toothed or notched about halfway across, and not barred right across to the shaft. The description and figure, therefore, clearly do not apply to the *Cacomantis flabelliformis* of the ‘Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum’ (xix. p. 266) and of writers in general. A very good figure of the bird to which Latham’s name has been applied in the latter work appears in Gould’s folio edition of the ‘Birds of Australia’ (iv. pl. lxxxvi.) under Vigors and Horsfield’s name of *Cuculus cineraceus*, for which apparently the specific name of *rufulus* of Vieillot will have to stand. I am unable, however, to verify his reference. Gould’s *Cuculus insperatus* is synonymous with the true *C. flabelliformis* of Latham. In the ‘Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum’ (xix. p. 273) Captain Shelley, instead of placing Gould’s name of *Cuculus insperatus* as a synonym of *Cacomantis variolosus*, as he has done with his *C. dumetorum*, allows it to stand for an exclusively extra-Australian species which inhabits New Guinea, New Britain, the Solomon and Aru Islands, and some of the Moluccas. The name cannot, however, be used for a species inhabiting these islands, for it was founded on an Australian specimen procured by Gould himself in the Liverpool Range, New South Wales, on the 29th of October,

1839. The type of *Cacomantis variolosus* (Vigors and Horsfield) was obtained by Caley at Parramatta in the same State. The species figured by Gould under the name of *Cuculus insperatus* (which appears to be the true *C. flabelliformis* of Latham) is fairly numerous in the neighbourhood of Sydney, where on several occasions I have taken its eggs, most frequently in the nests of *Rhipidura albiscapa*. Parramatta is fifteen miles distant from Sydney. I have now before me specimens obtained in different parts of New South Wales, but principally in the neighbourhood of Sydney; also from the eastern parts of Queensland, as far north as Cairns. Captain Shelley's descriptions of the adult males of *Cacomantis variolosus* and *C. insperatus* in the 'Catalogue of Birds'\* do not agree with Gould's original description and figure of *C. insperatus* and description of *C. dumetorum*, the latter of which Captain Shelley places as a synonym of *C. variolosus*. Both species are stated to be somewhat similar to *C. merulinus*, but in the distinctions pointed out no reference is made to the tail-feathers. Captain Shelley thus describes the tail of *Cacomantis merulinus* (p. 269):—"Tail slaty-black, with white ends; the *outer webs* of the feathers notched with white; the *inner webs* regularly barred with white, most strongly so on the outer feathers." The outer webs of the tail-feathers of Gould's *C. insperatus* are uniform in colour and without any white notch, as shown in his figure of that species; and, according to Gould's description, the tail-feathers of *C. dumetorum* are similar.

Briefly summed up, Gould's *Cuculus insperatus* agrees with Latham's original description and figure of *C. flabelliformis* and must bear that name. *C. variolosus*, which is stated by Captain Shelley to be synonymous with *C. dumetorum*, must also be referred to the *C. flabelliformis* of Latham. Gould's name of *C. insperatus* cannot be used for a species that is not found in Australia, but inhabits New Guinea and other islands; and the *Cacomantis flabelliformis*, not of Latham, but of the 'Catalogue of Birds in the British

\* Cat. B. Brit. Mus. vol. xix. pp. 272-3 (1891).

Museum,' will apparently in future have to bear the name of *Cacomantis rufulus* (Vieillot).

Recently, Dr. Ernst Hartert has pointed out in 'Novitates Zoologicae' (vol. xii. p. 217, 1905) that Latham's *Columba pallida* (Ind. Orn. Suppl. p. lx) was founded on the "Pale Pigeon" of the 'General Synopsis of Birds' (Suppl. ii. p. 270), and is not applicable to the well-known Pallid Cuckoo of Australia and Tasmania. As there appears from Dr. Hartert's remarks to be some uncertainty also about the propriety of using the name of *Cuculus variegatus* Vieillot, which he substitutes for Latham's name, would it not have been advisable, when changing it, to have given it the first specific name applied where no doubt could possibly exist as to the species it was intended for in the description? At least there would have been a greater chance of finality being assured in the nomenclature. According to Pucheran, Vieillot's description of *Cuculus cinereus*, given on the same page as that of *C. variegatus*, was founded on a specimen from New Holland. Vigors and Horsfield's description of this species (under the name of *Cuculus inornatus*) is unmistakable, and under this name the well-known "Pallid Cuckoo" is beautifully figured by Gould in his folio edition of the 'Birds of Australia.'

Passing on to the Meliphagidæ, I think that Shaw's specific name of "*lunulatus*," in use for the well-known *Melithreptus* of South-eastern Australia, should give way to Latham's older name "*atricapillus*." The *Certhia atricapilla* of Latham's 'Index Ornithologicus,' p. xxxvii (1801) is founded on the Black-headed Creeper of his 'General Synopsis of Birds' (Suppl. ii. p. 167), which he states inhabits New South Wales. It is accurately described, except that Latham omits to make any reference to the lunate white marks on the back of the head. Shaw's description of *Certhia lunulata*, published in 1817 (Gen. Zool. viii. p. 224), is applicable to the young of *Meliphaga atricapilla*, "the back, wings, and tail" being described as "cinnamon-brown." Temminck (Pl. Col. pl. 331. fig. 1) figures it as *Meliphaga atricapilla*, and refers it to the *Certhia atricapilla* of Latham, while pointing out

that the latter makes no reference in his description to the very characteristic white band on the occiput. Jardine and Selby, in their 'Illustrations of Ornithology' (vol. iii. pl. 134), figure *M. atricapilla* under Shaw's name of *lunulata*, and on the same plate figure, and on the following page describe, the Black-headed Honey-eater of Tasmania under the name of *Meliphaga atricapilla*. The latter name, however, is pre-occupied by Latham for the continental species. Jardine and Selby state:—"The two birds which we have now figured appear to be involved in some obscurity with regard to each other.... They both inhabit New Holland, Van Diemen's Land, and the islands of the Southern Ocean." Lesson's description of *Eidopsarus affinis*, published in the 'Revue Zoologique' in 1839 (p. 167)—"capite, genis, gulâque nigerrimis,"—apparently applies to the Tasmanian species, but the habitat is given as "Nova Wallia meridionalis." In the 'Catalogue of Birds in the British Museum' (ix. p. 207), Dr. Gadow refers to this description as of "*Meliphaga*" *affinis* and places this as a synonym of Gould's later description, published in the P. Z. S. 1845, p. 62, under the name of *Melithreptus melanocephalus*. If it is really synonymous with the latter species, Lesson's specific name "*affinis*" should take precedence. It is to be regretted, however, that Jardine and Selby did not give a distinctive appellation of their own, instead of using a preoccupied name of Latham's, for theirs is the first accurate description and figure of the Black-headed Honey-eater of Tasmania, these having been published in their 'Illustrations of Ornithology' in 1835. The habitats of the two species figured and described are partly incorrect, for the Lunulated Honey-eater is confined to Australia, and the Black-headed Honey-eater to Tasmania and some of the larger islands of Bass's Strait. But the assignment of wrong habitats was of common occurrence at that time when so little was known of the Antipodes.

The next species to which I wish to refer is the *Corvus paradoxus* of Latham, which was erroneously stated to inhabit New Zealand, a habitat also given by Gould in his original description to *Oreocincla macrorhyncha*.

